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A STUDY OF THE SANITARY CONDITIONS OF THE HOME ENVIRONMENT OF THE
SMITHLAND DISTRICT CHILDREN WITH A PLANNED PROGRAM FOR
IMPROVEMENT

By

Leonie M. Smith

A Thesis in Education Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

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I am deeply grateful to Miss A. C. Preston for the interest she manifested in me in helping to prepare this Thesis. Her high standards of scholarship will ever be an inspiration to me and my pupils. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. G. L. Harrison, Head of the Educational Department for making it possible for the Assistant Professor of Prairie View College to guide and advise me in writing a Thesis.

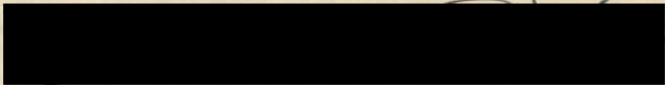


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When we think of the study of the sanitary conditions of the home environments of Smithland District children we have in mind a careful regard for cleanliness. No field of education within the last two years has shown more originality and vitality than that of health studies. We have as much right to demand physical fitness as intellectual and moral fitness. So often the children of the Smithland District come to school when they are physically unfit to study.

More attention should be given to the absences of children from school; a high per cent of absence in a given school or locality has important hygienic relationship. When such absences are due to ill health, the matter should concern the Board of Health. Absences caused by home duties, or employment may affect the child's mental, moral and physical development. The consolidated school systems, with free transportation and all the opportunities they bring, should provide laws against the absence from school unless it is beyond the parents and children's control. Sometimes during the spring twenty-five per cent of the children are absent from school four or five days in one month because of having to help their parents on the farm. Efforts are being launched to take care of short-comings of such children. A special type of institution has had a great growth in America since the World's War, the continuation of school. This

type of school is to meet the needs of the child who has had to go to work in his middle teens before he has completed an adequate school training.

In making a careful study of the rural survey of Smithland District we found there were six hundred inhabitants, one hundred and seventy-two female, one hundred and sixty-seven male, one hundred and twenty-nine under school age and one hundred and thirty-two families. During the school term of 1937-38 we had about nine cases of illness, bad colds and tonsillitis. This interfered with the regular attendance of our school, after which a study of the sanitary conditions of the home environments were interviewed by individual teachers throughout the District. Most of the parents of the Smithland District are beginning to realize the personal needs for their health and should not be neglected. The school nurse, the school doctor and the school dentist are now part of the regular personnel of our more advanced elementary and secondary school systems, and at the college level there is usually complete health service. It is commonly supposed that good health is the invariable accompaniment of county life; that children who are brought up in the country are always free from diseases. The health of the people is the one great asset of any country.

Ninety percent of the people in the Smithland District are engaged in farm work, a few are engaged in fishing and clerical work. Farm work consumes most of the farmer's time. At certain seasons farming communities depend upon children to help with the work on

the farms. Child labor is in special demand during the harvesting and planting seasons; a little useful work is good for children, but they should not be deprived of rightful opportunities for education. The capacity for work is one of the principal characteristics of the human body. No experience of daily life is more familiar than work, but children under school age should not be permitted to work on the farm at the expense of an education.

So often they are over worked, their growth stunted, and their little bodies become physically weak. Farming is a very important occupation. More money is invested in it than any other type of enterprise. It gives employment to more persons than any other single industry in the Smithland District. Its purchases keep the wheel of industry turning one third or more of the time. Its products lead the majority of the freight cars outside of the East. Its surpluses make up from one third to one half of our foreign export trade; its soil bears and sustains the crops and livestock that answers the daily prayers for bread. Farming is the bed rock of Smithland District's civilization and whenever it fails the entire district suffers loss.

Health Status

1. General Conditions. Each child should have a medical examination at least once a year but twice a year is desirable; one in the Fall to determine general fitness for school work, and one in the late Spring or summer may help determine the summer vacation plans. The health conditions of the Smithland District children

brought them to public attention because a few of them have had no health training of any kind. So often when they enter school they have physical defects. The nature and distribution of these defects may be seen in the survey record made in the Smithland District at the Gethsemane High School.

II. Cause of Illness. Lack of home control, bad tonsils, defected eyes, dental defects and omitting the daily bath are some of the general causes of illness. In the second week of May, 1939, Dr. Terry, of Jefferson, Texas, examined three-fourths of the Smithland District children and it was found that the common disease called "itch" was contagious in the community because of carelessness on the part of the parent. A P.T.A. Club was organized in the Smithland District and, for their year's program the members aimed to obtain as many defect corrections as possible as a part of their educational program. They decided to try to improve the health of all the children. A well-balanced program throughout the school day gives ample opportunity for putting health into practice.

(a) Heredity. The characteristics that are handed down from the parent to the child is called heredity. A child may be personally normal but may carry with him defective genes. He may be patient, industrious, intelligent, but may have concealed within himself, as it were another personality, a personality that is irritable, lazy and stupid, that is, he may carry imperfect genes that yield an irritable, lazy or stupid person. It is essential

to understand the biological problems of society of man. Two parents may both be seriously defective in the same characteristic and yet produce offsprings that are without personal defect.

(b) Personal Contact. Our schools are confronted by an important problem, that of providing an environment by which each child can learn to live with others and yet retain his personal identity. To live with others and yet grow in the assurance that he too is superior and he alone is distinctive in some traits that he has something to contribute to the groups in which he lives. Personal contact will aid children in learning to work effectively with a group at a common interest. It sets up situations which provide constant practice in co-operative living.

(c) Poor Drainage. A study of the sanitary conditions of the home environments of the Smithland District children has caused more pit type toilets in the community and at every school in Marion County the School Board has demanded a sanitary toilet instead of the dry one. Our Colored High School is on a hill and has good drainage and sanitary toilets. Our school has a water fountain and before this time individual drinking cups were provided. Good health cannot be maintained where poor drainage exists. All wells, houses and toilets

should be built on hills to eliminate drainage in the proper way.

Remedial Factors

Vigorous, happy, physical activity is a necessity for health. It develops strong muscles, strong lungs and a keen appetite. Good digestion and elimination stimulates efficient mental activity and gives a standard of good posture, and promotes robust health. The school should look beyond the school life of the child and try to encourage and develop an interest in physical activity in the out door play that will extend later into adult life with its fruitage of health and mental poise. The physical director should be a remedial factor in the health work of any school system. The cause of various diseases should be ascertained and suitable remedies applied.

Pre-School Clinics. It is very necessary to have access to pre-school clinics because a child is in the home six years before he or she enters school and most of the time he enters school with a defective body and the teacher must discover and solve many problems to find the physical defects of her pupils. We should take good care of small children because in them lies the future generation. No child can maintain health without the intelligent cultivation of right habits and the elimination of bad habits.

Correcting Defects. A large proportion of the physical defects of children might have been corrected or prevented if the schools had been doing their part to train children to conserve and

improve their health. The information relating to personal cleanliness, eating, sleeping, posture, care of the eyes, avoidance of unwise exposure to contagious diseases, fresh air, out of door exercise, are valuable and should give emphasis on correcting defects.

City Health Officers. City Health Officers or Sanitary Inspectors can give very effective service and stimulate a real interest in the better hygiene and sanitation of the school. The Health Officers will be glad to help in the plans of the school to keep the school building equipment and the premises. He is responsible for impure water, unclean streets and should destroy the micro-organisms by chemical or physical means. The City Health Officers are interested in healthy teachers, who provide for the intellectual and physical growth of the child.

IV. Child Health as a Factor in School Attendance.

If a school nurse is available pupils who are habitually tardy because of sickness should be reported to her. The teacher should find time to visit the home environments, observe conditions, make suggestions in her teaching and to the Parent-Teachers Association that will lead to improvement. Health teaching should be strongly emphasized, especially with those who need it. Instruction in keeping well should be given all the time in all grades. An improvement in attendance is necessary. The health program should be motivated by the determination to reduce diseases in the community.

Home environments may be surveyed through the Parent-Teachers

Association, and some reference made to the importance of regularity; the object would be to make attendance voluntary by building up right kinds of schools. The teacher should make the school efficient and interesting and see that in her own attendance she sets a good example of punctuality and regularity.

The Smith and District School of Self-Improvement was started in 1901. The school was started with the idea of giving the children in their rooms. With sound physical health, life takes on a new meaning and suggests great possibilities where home environments are salubrious. The school garden in the Smith and District was started with two considerations, the soil and the location. We found by experience that most vegetables can be grown on many different types of soil. This fact should encourage everyone to try to produce a large supply of vegetables for the entire year.

The garden had a distinct educational value. It served as an outdoor laboratory for the school, it was a model for many home gardens, it was a credit to the school and was evidence of an enthusiastic principal. It blended with the garden work at home and the children were taught in groups the proper way to prepare the soil to plant seed and other garden operations.

The home garden are very helpful in the Smith and District. They afford an opportunity to increase the food supply and make the community a more attractive place in which to live. Home gardens are essential. It places the child upon his own responsibility and this is good for his personal development. Children should be

CHAPTER II.

HEALTH AND SANITATION OF SMITHLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL

In the Smithland District the Principal of Gethsemane High School suggested that each teacher under his supervision would give a certain amount of time and attention to the health conditions of the children in their rooms. With sound physical health, life takes on worth while aspects and suggests great possibilities where home environments are sanitary. The school garden in the Smithland District was marked off with two considerations, the soil and the location. We found by experience that most vegetables can be grown on many different types of soil. This fact should encourage everyone to try to produce a large supply of vegetables for the entire year.

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taught to cultivate a taste for a variety of foods. That which can not be obtained from the gardens will no doubt be found in the grocery stores. To teach the elements of agriculture as an industry on which our lives depend we must teach independence and self reliance.

Children should be trained and supervised in their eating habits. The body influences the mind and the mind has much to do with controlling the body. The aims of all forms of garden work are to afford children an opportunity to have a form of exercise that will put them in good health and keep them so.

Sanitary Conditions of Home District in Relation to Economy and Efficiency

Every effort should be made to encourage boys and girls to drink several glasses of good rich milk every day. The addition of suitable quantities of milk to the diet of an under-nourished child will often solve the physical problem in the course of a few months. Improving the present economic status, malnutrition is one of the chief enemies of childhood and that in effect means a poorly nourished body. It may arise from a number of causes--one is improper food. The best test for malnutrition is weight.

The school lunch affords a splendid opportunity to bring about an improvement in eating habits and in the selection of foods. No man can do his work successfully eating improper food and omitting personal cleanliness. His physical, moral and social needs must be cared for.

Improving Living Conditions. The community should look after

the health of its children, the health of the school child is an interest to the teacher. Obeying the laws of health and improving the conditions of living is a great contribution to the welfare of the future generation. The kindergarten and primary grades continue to lay emphasis on healthy habits by providing hygienic environment and a schedule of living which provides the correct amount of physical activity and rest.

Development of Health Supervision. The development of health habits which become an integral part of the children's living is a primary duty of the school. Children should be allowed to live fully and naturally, to develop and grow by enjoying self-initiated unified experiences. Some teachers have well developed technique for dealing with mental ailments of children. Others will meet children on their own level and by knowledge of the children are able to move the cause of disability. The health supervisor gives practical aid to the teachers in solving health problems.

Physical Fitness Versus Moral Fitness. Moral character is the backbone of good citizenship. Nowhere are there opportunities for character building than on the playground. We learn to do by doing and the child on the playground, in the midst of activity that is natural to him can be more effectively guided in right doing than at any other time or in any other place. In teaching we should use incentives that develop moral character and results in the pupil's self-control. If the Smithland District children were physically unfit for attendance in school and morally fit the school would be

handicapped for regular attendance. Morals and health must coincide. In high schools physical education teachers have a great opportunity to give individual help. They can do much in urging backward boys and girls into athletics and strenuous physical exercise. The athletic teacher, because of her contact with girls is able to speak with more persuasive authority in matters of physical fitness than anyone else in the institution.

Survey of Sanitary Conditions for Future

Improvement

The Smithland District was surveyed to discover the sanitary conditions of the home environment and plans were suggested to improve these conditions.

Civic Enterprises. The school's chief objective should be the development of right and social civic habits and attitudes. It is necessary to make use of common situations which are found in every school, home and community. Civic situations are all about us, the teacher is fortunate who can see them and use them for the benefit of the child's growth and development. One fundamental function of the school is to promote the spirit of good citizenship among its pupils. True enough, other things are needed besides the will to do well, but without this all else is vain, if not absolutely harmful.

Home Improvement. People are making their homes larger, more sanitary, are digging wells and putting down pumps for a

better water supply. The young people are influencing and will continue to influence the homes by helping to create interest and activity in local betterment. The parent can instill in their boys and girls a deep interest in the biographies of great men of all nations, in world history and in geography will give a background of knowledge, appreciation and ideals. A happy home goes far in creating right thinking; public service today needs creative and wise leadership from the best homes of the community. The home is knob upon which the community must depend for its support. The home prepares the way for a study of its outstanding needs, leadership, creative and intelligent, family unity, cooperation and sound standards. These are essential to promote and improve the home.

School Cooperating with Home. The home stands in close relation to the school and is under special obligations to it. The school as an educational institution, stands for a few fundamental virtues, industry, obedience and order. In the attainment of these virtues the home must join heartily with the school if both are to prosper. The school must not stand apart. Its purpose is to serve the interest of pupils and the community at large.

6. Eat vegetables and fruit every day.
7. Take out-door exercise daily.
8. Keep clean hands, face, nails, teeth and ears.
9. Cultivate erect posture.
10. Drink plenty of fresh water every day.

CHAPTER III

HEALTH EDUCATION

Health Habits. Health habits should be strongly emphasized.

A health program should be motivated to reduce diseases in the community. This is why we study the sanitary conditions of the home environment of the Smithland District. Health knowledge is useful only to the extent to which it functions in an actual life situation. Health habits are many but different schools and different children vary as to which they need to develop. Since there are so many small children in the Smithland District it is very necessary for the primary teachers to post on the walls in their individual rooms a list of the most important health habits, which should be as follows:

1. Take a full bath three times a week or more.
2. Brush the teeth after each meal.
3. Have the sleeping rooms properly ventilated.
4. Get the amount of sleep suited to the health of the child.
5. Drink milk. Avoid tea or coffee.
6. Eat vegetables and fruit every day.
7. Take out-door exercise daily.
8. Keep clean hands, face, nails, neck and ears.
9. Cultivate erect posture.
10. Drink plenty of fresh water every day.

The best results in health habits are possible when the teacher exemplifies what she teaches. She should participate¹ in the activities that she recommends to the pupils.

Personal Hygiene. As one's usefulness in the world depends directly on the quantity and quality of mental and physical energy he has to spend, it is necessary to know the important factors which contribute to personal health and efficiency, such as in food, exercise and sleep. We can not exercise too great care in the selection, preparation and eating of our food, or we shall yet condemn ourselves to ill health by our misunderstanding. Our food should be selected with reference to a proper balance. It is important for us to know the real nutritive value of the foods that we commonly eat.

It should be constantly borne in mind that for the proper support of life we must have a considerable amount of proteid since this alone builds up the tissues of the body. Carbohydrates and fats can be used only as sources of heat and force. Training in the habits of physical hygiene should be a continuation of the training of early childhood.

¹The Beginning Teacher

Almack & Lang, Chapter 21, Pp 418-420

Haughton Mifflin Co., Dallas, Texas, 1928

Sex Education. The instruction in the nature and function of the reproductive organs and the part that sex plays in the life of the growing human being should be a continuation of earlier sex instruction. In other words, the parent should not think of adolescence as the time for a campaign in physical hygiene and sex instruction. Just as habits of physical hygiene, either good or bad, are formed long before adolescence, so sex information, either good or bad, is picked up by most children¹ before puberty.

The parent who thinks that the child who does not discuss these things is ignorant of them should be warned that the child's very silence may indicate a greater knowledge than he cares to share with his parent.

The mother's instruction should prepare the girl for the occurrence of menstruation, explaining its purpose in relation to child bearing and advising her how to care for herself during this time. The girl should also be given some understanding of her sex reactions. Boys and girls should be told not only about the organs and processes of reproduction in their own sex but also about those of the other sex. Above all they should be made to feel free to ask any questions or consult their parents about any feelings or experiences which they find puzzling or disturbing.

1

Guiding The Adolescence by D. A. Thomas, M. D.
United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1933.

Protection Against Certain Health Programs. The school is greatly handicapped in the matter of health education. A child's constitution may become strong by eating the proper food at the proper time. The aim of a health program in general should be to develop strong, healthy, and vigorous individuals. The strong child should be taught how to maintain his strength; the weak and defective child should be taught how to improve his condition. For children to be physically fit as nature will permit, three divisions of health education must be incorporated into the school program:

1. Instruction, including hygiene and physiology.
2. Training, including the development of health habits.
3. Control of the environment.

Adequate Social Life. In some country schools the school paper has been a distinct socializing agency. Boys and girls develop power of initiative and a sense of personal responsibility in this way that is exceptional. Every rural school should have a thriving school society in which all pupils take as active part as their abilities and the conditions will warrant. If the entire school presents a first class program in which all have a share, the socializing influence will be evident. The teacher with the social aim in mind will be satisfied with nothing less than a development of a social consciousness in her school.

Recreation. If children fail to secure a sufficient amount of out door exercise and proper relaxation they are sure to suffer.

Nothing can take the place of exercise. The teacher as well as the children should take exercise to stimulate the breathing capacity, vigorous digestion, a sound nervous system, a strong heart and good blood well circulated. No teacher can teach successfully unless she has a good supply of well-oxygenated blood which is pumped to all the tissues and organs by a vigorous heart. Recreation sometimes is rest and sleep and sometimes is exercise. Physical activity is a necessity, it develops a keen appetite and good digestion. It gives a standard of good posture and promotes robust health. Wholesome recreation will aid in the controlling of children. If the teacher will arrange to walk for an hour in the morning before school and another hour after school she will find it making a big difference in her teaching efficiency.

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Handbook of Health Education by Ruth E. Gromt
Chapter 1, Pp 3-14, Doubleday, Doran & Company
Garden City, New York, 1936

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION

In the study of the sanitary conditions of the home environments of the Smithland District children with a planned program for improvement naturally we would consider cleanliness as being essential for bodily welfare. No field of education has shown more originality and vitality than that of health studies. Attention should be given to the absences of children from school. When absences are due to ill health the matter should concern the Board of Health.

Absences will affect the mental, moral and physical development of all school children. The consolidated school system with its many conveniences should provide laws against the absence from school unless it is beyond the individual's control. In the survey of the Smithland District about six hundred inhabitants were found--one hundred and seventy-two female, one hundred and sixty-seven male, one hundred and twenty-nine under school age and one hundred and thirty-two families. Most of the parents of the Smithland District are beginning to realize the importance of health and why it should not be neglected. The health of the people is the one great asset of any community. In the Smithland District farm work is the leading occupation. Child labor is in special demand during the harvesting and planting seasons. No experience of daily life is more familiar than work, but children under school age should not be

permitted to work on the farm at the expense of an education. Farming gives employment to more persons than any other single industry in the Smithland District.

Each child should have a medical examination twice a year. So often when they enter school they have physical defects. The school has little control over those matters in the child's daily life that are the most significant in determining health. A Parent Teacher Association Club was organized in Smithland District in the fall of 1938. Their year's program was to obtain as many defect corrections as possible. Their educational program was to improve the health of all children. A child may be personally normal but may carry with him defective genes. He may be patient, industrious, intelligent, but may have concealed within himself, as it were another personality, a personality that is irritable, lazy and stupid.

Heredity gives many surprising results. Two parents may both be seriously defective in the same characteristic and yet produce offsprings that are without the personal defect. Our schools are confronted by an important problem, providing an environment by which each child can learn to live with others and yet retain his personal identity. Vigorous, happy and physical activities are necessary for health. A child that enters school with a defective body, the teacher must solve many problems to find the physical defects of her pupils.

In the Smithland District each teacher is advised to give a certain amount of time to the health conditions of the children in their rooms. The teacher should give useful instruction on gardens. From them people get the greater portion of their daily food. Malnutrition is one of the chief enemies of childhood, which means a poorly nourished body. The community should look after the health of its children. Smithland District was surveyed to discover the sanitary conditions of the home environment and plans were suggested to improve these conditions.

The home prepares the way for a study of its outstanding needs, leadership, creative and intelligent, family unity and co-operation and sound standards. These are essential to promote and improve the home. The school must be regarded as an extension of home. A health program should be motivated to reduce diseases. It is necessary to know the important factors which contribute to personal health and efficiency. Boys and girls should be told about the organs and processes of reproduction.

The home should control the matters in the child's life that are most significant. Every rural school should have a literary society where all pupils can take an active part in a first class program. The teacher as well as the children should take exercise to stimulate the breathing capacity.

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